

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, A PROCLAMATION:

With autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) affecting nearly one percent of children in the United States, autism is an urgent public health issue with a profound impact on millions of Americans. World Autism Awareness Day is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of individuals with ASDs and rededicate ourselves to the cause of understanding and responding to autism.

Men and women on the autism spectrum have thrived and excelled in communities across America and around the world. Yet, despite great progress in understanding ASDs, challenges remain for these individuals and their loved ones. For too

long, the needs of people living with autism and their families have gone without adequate support and understanding. While we continue to encourage the development of resources for children on the autism spectrum and provide necessary resources for their families, we must also remember that young people with ASDs become adults with ASDs who deserve our support, our respect, and the opportunity to realize their highest aspirations. As our understanding of the autism spectrum grows, my Administration remains dedicated to supporting children and adults impacted by autism. Led by the Department of Health and Human Services, we have expanded investments in autism research, public health tracking, early detection, and services -- from early intervention for children to improved long-term services and support programs for adults. My Administration maintains a firm commitment to advance autism research and treatment, as well as promote education, employment, and equality for all individuals with autism, from early childhood through employment and community life. We will continue to work with the Congress, experts, and families to improve Federal and State programs that assist individuals with ASDs and their families and to bolster the impact and reach of community support and services. I encourage all Americans to visit www.HHS.gov/autism for more information and resources on ASDs.

With each breakthrough in research and each innovative treatment, we open endless possibilities for the many American families who have been touched by autism. As we mark World Autism Awareness Day, let us recommit to improving the lives of individuals and families impacted by ASDs and creating a world free from discrimination where all can achieve their fullest potential.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 2 of each year as World Autism Awareness Day. I call upon the people of the United States to learn more about autism and what they can do to support individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

BARACK OBAMA

Statement by Secretary Sebelius on National Autism Awareness Month:

Every April we recognize National Autism Awareness Month and the special challenges faced by those with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). CDC estimates that an average of 1 in 110 children in the U.S. have an ASD. At the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, we continue to strive to meet the complex needs of all people with ASD and their families.

ASD symptoms range from mild to severe and the condition may pose significant communication and behavioral challenges. There is no cure, but we know that early intervention can greatly improve a child's development. The first three years are particularly critical. That's why we are educating more health professionals to recognize the signs and symptoms early, so children can get treatment when it is most likely to be effective.

Last year, we established a new national resource and information center to provide information on community-based services and interventions for people with ASD and their families. Last month, we announced a new website that provides job skills training for high school graduates who have ASD or other disabilities. New research funds are being

used to deepen our understanding of ASD, test innovative treatments, study genes associated with ASD, and explore the needs of the growing number of adults with ASD.

The Affordable Care Act, the health care law signed a year ago by President Obama, will help ease the financial burden that often comes with treating and caring for people with ASD. The law requires new plans to cover autism screening and developmental assessments for children at no cost to parents, and allows parents to keep their children on their family health insurance until they turn 26. Insurers will also no longer be allowed to deny children coverage for a pre-existing condition such as ASD or to set arbitrary lifetime or annual limits on benefits.

This April, and all year, let us reflect on this urgent public health challenge and rededicate ourselves to addressing the needs of people and families with ASD.

For more information on the Department's efforts regarding ASD, please visit <http://www.hhs.gov/autism/> or <http://www.healthcare.gov/foryou/family/soon/index.html>.